

twelfth and a fourteenth but no thirteenth floor. The Chinese, however, have been behind no other people in their anxiety to take advantage of lucky and to avoid unlucky days, hours, and places, in ascribing disease to spirits, and in devices for fending off spirits which are believed to bring misfortune.

Yet, as we have seen more than once in preceding chapters, the Chinese can boast of many robust sceptics. Thinking of them, one modern Chinese has declared—with more enthusiasm than precise accuracy—that the Chinese were the first people to out-grow religion. From at least Yang Chu and Hsün Tzu in the Chou there has been a strain of more or less open dissent from currently accepted beliefs. It appears not to have been entirely lacking in Confucius. Certainly some famous passages in the *Lun Yü* have led many of his professed followers to find in him a precedent for their own agnosticism. This scepticism has often contained a good deal of what was at least superficially inconsistent. A Han Yü might denounce most caustically the imperial honors to a miracle-working bone of Buddha and yet write an exhortation to a crocodile to depart from the district in which he had jurisdiction. Again and again officials who have privately expressed disbelief in the existence of spirits, in their public capacity have led in ceremonies which have had as their object the control of these same spirits. In this they were again not without precedent in Confucius, for, even though that revered teacher may have been agnostic concerning at least some of the beliefs of his day, he strongly advocated the meticulous and reverent performance of the traditional rites.

It must also be said, what must have been apparent from much

that has been recorded in the historical chapters,
that a great deal
of profound thought on some of the ultimate
philosophic and
religious problems is to be found in Chinese
literature, and that
by no means all of it ends in the denial of the reality
of the objects
of man's religious faith. Through the centuries
many Chinese
have been sceptical of much of the popular
superstition and yet
have been deeply religious and could give a reason
for the faith
that was in them.

Chinese religion has had both the social and the
individual em-
phasis. According to the Confucian tradition,
religion is largely
for the salvation of society, for cultivating those
relations among